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GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY,
MUSLIM UNIVERSITY,
ALIGARH.

With the compliments of the Honorary Secretary.

INTRODUCTION.

The Department of Geography at the Aligarh Muslim University has a number of unique features. It is the only University Department in India so far which provides courses leading to the M.A. and M.Sc. Degrees in Geography and offers facilities for advanced research necessary for the Doctorate. Its alumni have gone forth and taken charge of geography teaching in various colleges and universities in different parts of India. Following the lead given by Aligarh, colleges and universities in different Indian provinces have made provision for the teaching of this important subject. This is all for the good of the country at the present stage of its political awakening when public consciousness needs more than at any other time of Indian history to be rightly educated as to the existence and utilization of the abundant natural resources of the country.

Members of the Delegation of British Scientists, including some of the leading geographers of the British Isles, such as Dr. Dudley Stamp, Prof. Gordon and Dr. Ogg, who visited the University in December, 1937, paid glowing tributes to Aligarh for its pioneer work in geography and called the Department "the Mecca of Indian Geographers".

HISTORY.

The history of the Department reveals a bright record of achievements. The Department was established in 1925, with provision for courses leading to the M.A Degree. Soon afterwards, however, the post-graduate classes had to be suspended for want of a fully qualified staff. It took a new lease of life in 1930 when Dr. I. R. Khan came over from the U.P. Educational Service to take charge of the Department. Dr. I. R. Khan had returned from England in Novem-

ber, 1929, with a Ph.D. Degree in Geography from the University of London and after assuming charge at Aligarh, he took seriously in hand the work of re-organizing the Department. Courses of study were remodelled on the lines of the London University courses and progressive methods of teaching were introduced. Within a couple of years the number of students went up. The Government of India gave the necessary permission for starting the M A. Classes once more and the first batch that took its examination in 1933 included students from all parts of India. Each year proved an year of expansion and the subject grew so much in popularity that in 1935 the Department of Geography outpaced all other University Departments in enrolment. The enrolment has gone up from 29 in 1930 to about 600. Besides the under-graduate students and M.A. and M.Sc students there are at present 5 students registered for advanced research.

Dr I. R. Khan rejoined the U.P. Educational Service on the expiry of his period of deputation, at the commencement of the session 1937-38, after seven years of untiring work. To him largely goes the credit for bringing the Department to its present level of excellence. The Executive Council of the University has honoured him by appointing him Honorary Professor of Geography, and he still maintains contact with the Department, placing at its disposal his expert advice and periodically visiting it. The present Chairman, Dr. S. M. Tahir Rizvi, B.A. (Hons.) London, Ph D. London, M.A., LL.B (Alig.), Bar-at-Law, is a brilliant product of the Muslim University who has a distinguished record of work at the University of London from where he obtained his B.A. (Hons.) and Ph.D. degrees in Geography. Dr. Rizvi's thesis "An Economic and Regional Geography of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh" for the Ph.D. degree which was greatly appreciated in England is expected to be shortly published in this country.

Some teachers of the Department of Geography left for England in 1937 on study leave to pursue courses of advanced study and research at the University of London. Mr. Kazi Saeeduddin Ahmed has joined the University College, Messrs. M.A. Alavi and S. Muzaffar Ali have gone to the Birkbeck College and Mr. Ashraf Khan is studying at the School of Economics and Political Science, London. Besides, these gentlemen two ex-students, Messrs. Mukerji and Mathur are researching at Edinburgh and London respectively.

A number of M.A.'s of the Department are doing useful work as teachers in different parts of the country. Messrs. Zahir Ahsan and S. A. Majid are running the Geography Section at the Patna College, Mr. Masud Alam Kureishy is teaching at the Victoria College, Gwalior and Mr. Farhatullah Khan is serving in the Panjab Education Service. Besides these University and College teachers, a large number of the old alumni of the Department are teaching in secondary schools in different Indian provinces.

COURSES OF STUDY.

The courses of study for the Honours and M.A. Classes are very similar to those of the London University which has the most up-to-date equipment and facilities at the present time for advanced work in Geography. Provision exists at Aligarh for instruction in many branches of modern Geography, such as the Physical Basis of Geography, History of Geographical Science, Economic Geography, Anthropogeography, Biogeography, regional and economic study of various continents, etc. A paper on India requiring the intensive and advanced study of the geography of the country has been introduced this year. Advanced research is at present being done on the following subjects:—

1. Mr. Abrar Husain Qadri:

‘Economic Geography of Mughal India 1556-1756.’

2. Mr. Qaiser Husain Zaidi:
‘An Economic and Regional Geography of Bihar.’
3. Mr. Shamsul Islam:
‘A Regional and Economic Survey of the Ghaggar Plain (the area between the Sutlej and the Jumna).’
4. Mr. M. Younus:
‘A Survey of the Food Resources of the U.P. in relation to the Population Problem’.
5. Mr. Fazal Ahmed Khan:
‘The Effect of Perennial Irrigation on the Growth of Population and the Rural Economy of the Panjab’.

OTHER FEATURES.

(a) *Seminar Library* — The Department possesses a large Seminar Library of its own, with no less than 5,000 books, which include much up-to-date literature on the subject. The Library is housed in a spacious room which has reading accommodation for over 50 students. Besides college hours the Library remains open for another 8 hours. Further extension of the Library is contemplated in view of the large increase in the number of post-graduate students and the growing keenness of under-graduate students to make use of Library facilities.

(b) *Laboratory and arrangements for practical work.*— A fully equipped room for practical work and a laboratory are a valuable feature of the Department. Facilities are provided for instruction in cartographical work and penmanship by a qualified draughtsman. Experiments are conducted in the Laboratory which is attached to the practical room.

(c) *Museum.*— A museum is indispensable to the teaching of many branches of modern Geography. The Department

now possesses a museum which contains valuable exhibits and other necessary material for demonstration purposes. The museum is a later addition and it is desirable that it be equipped more fully. More space and more funds are required to make the museum worthy of the reputation of the Department. The University is being asked to find the necessary funds for the development of the museum.

(d) *Photographic Section*:—Photography is essential for the study of modern Geography. The Photographic Section was started three years ago, with a studio and a dark room attached to it. Student members of the Photographic Society receive instruction in Photography. The preparation of slides is part of the practical course of the M.A. Classes. The Society holds frequent meetings at which papers are read and results discussed.

Another branch of the useful work done by the Photographic Section is the making of motion pictures of outstanding visits and functions at the University *i.e.* Lord Willingdon and H. E. H. The Nizam's visit, the Aga Khan's reception, Annual Convocation scenes, etc. The Department possesses movie cameras, projectors, a big epidiascope and a demonstration theatre. Mr. Nasir Khan, M.A., Demonstrator, who is incharge of the section is largely responsible for the useful work that is being done by this section.

(e) *The Geographical Society*.—The Geographical Society is as old as the Department. A number of meetings are held each session at which papers are read and lectures delivered. In order to attract larger numbers to such meetings films of geographical interest and suitable lantern slides are shown.

Travel and observation constitute two fruitful methods of the study of the subject. The Geographical Society arranges excursions to various parts of the country from time to time. During recent years a number of excursions

were organised. The Pindari Glacier was visited by a party of post-graduate students who gathered much useful information, which was later published by Mr. Abrar Husain Kadri, a lecturer in the Department. A trip to South India was arranged in 1936, a trekking party went across the hills from Mussoorie to Simla and the Lucknow Industrial Exhibition was visited by the junior students. At the invitation of Mr Zahir Ahsan, Lecturer Patna College (an old boy) a trip to the unfrequented parts of the Chota Nagpur hills is contemplated in September next.

Realising the importance of Aligarh as the best equipped centre for the study of Geography in India, it has been decided to publish an up-to-date journal as soon as possible. Mr. Nafis Ahmed, M A., Lecturer who is keenly interested in journalism has been appointed Editor and he is making arrangements for the publication of the Magazine primarily for the advanced students and teachers of Geography in the country. A scheme for the addition of a Section of Geology is also under consideration, and it is hoped that the University finances will permit the establishment of this section.

Thus the Department of Geography has a record of remarkable progress, which has won countrywide recognition. We hope it will continue to expand and do useful work in the future, until the importance of the subject in the Universities and in the secondary and primary education systems of the country comes to be universally recognised. On this recognition, we feel, depends to a very large extent the economic emancipation of the country.

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